

School Annual Education Report (AER) Cover Letter

2-18-25

Dear Parents and Community Members:

We are pleased to present you with the Annual Education Report (AER), which provides key information on the 2024-25 educational progress for New Horizons. The AER addresses the complex reporting information required by federal and state laws. The school's report contains information about student assessment, accountability, and teacher quality. If you have any questions about the AER, please contact Riley Denison for assistance.

The AER is available for you to review electronically by visiting the following website https://www.mischooldata.org/annual-education-report-1?Common_Locations=1-S,11514,1747,115, or you may review a copy in the main office at your child's school.

For the 2024-25 school year, schools were identified based on previous years' performance using definitions and labels as required in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). A Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) school is one that had at least one underperforming student subgroup in 2023-24. An Additional Targeted Support (ATS) school is one that had a student subgroup performing at the same level as the lowest 5% of all schools in the state in 2021-22. A Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) school is one whose performance was in the lowest 5% of all schools in the state, had a graduation rate at or below 67%, or failed to exit ATS status in 2021-22. Some schools are not identified with any of these labels. In these cases, no label is given.

Our school was not given one of these labels.

Due to the nature of the students' disabilities and the limited number of students taking state assessments, there is little assessment data available in the AER reports. When fewer than 10 students take an assessment, the state does not report the "percentage of students proficient," and few conclusions can be drawn regarding student achievement. While all of our students participate in state testing within the grade levels that testing is offered, our decreased number of students within each grade level taking a given test results in decreased availability of combined data related to proficiency. The North Ed New Horizons Program consists of five classrooms for students with moderate cognitive impairments, four classrooms for students with severe multiple impairments, one classroom for students with a severe cognitive impairment and one transitional classroom at the elementary level. Students attending these programs come from the five counties served by North Ed. A majority

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of our students have complex communication needs. Many utilize Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems to communicate with others. Finding AAC that works best for students and providing consistent modeling with AAC in order to increase student growth in communication skills are challenges that our programs have addressed through providing access to a variety of AAC (Core boards, PODD, communication apps on iPads, etc.), heavy involvement of the speech and language pathologists within our programs, specialized training for staff, parent training, and school improvement goals specifically addressing increasing students' communication skills. Additional challenges arise from the high needs of our students in the following areas: medical, behavior, mobility, and cognition. We address these needs through a multidisciplinary approach. Our multidisciplinary team includes school social workers, special education teachers, school psychologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech and language pathologists, teacher consultants for the visually impaired, teacher consultants for the hearing impaired, orientation and mobility specialists, teacher assistants, and nurses. School initiatives include the implementation of MOVE (Mobility Opportunities Via Education) to support the development of functional mobility skills, the implementation of Active Learning within SXI programs to promote learning through active exploration of one's environment, increasing parent involvement, and continuously evaluating and improving how we teach the curriculum within our programs. Within the past two years, we have adopted new curricular materials for science, math, self-regulation, and language arts. State law requires that we also report additional information for the two most recent school years:

- New Horizons includes eleven classrooms in four locations, all considered one program, primarily serving students ages three to eighteen who are eligible for special education under the cognitive impairment, Autism Spectrum Disorder, or severe multiple impairment rule. Students are placed in the program based on Individualized Education Program team determination. Each classroom is staffed with a teacher and at least two teaching assistants for as few as approximately six or as many as 13 students, depending on students' needs and following the guidelines within the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education. Based on each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), the student may also receive physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, social work services, nursing, or specialized services for hearing and/or vision impairment. Classrooms for older students have a significant community-based instruction component.
- Our district school improvement plan currently consists of goals related to establishing a strong system for data-based decision making that will lead to student growth in math and literacy. As part of this work, teachers are involved in professional learning communities that address effective assessment of students' skills, curriculum alignment to state standards, and effective instructional practices. They participate in data review meetings three times a year where student data related to math and literacy is reviewed and action plans are developed based on individual student needs.

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- Teachers use curricular materials that allow students to access the state standards through instructional and response modifications. The modified curriculum is aligned to the Essential Elements. For additional information, please contact Leigh Kennedy at (231) 922-6393 or lkennedy@northwested.org. In addition to traditional academics, our SXI programs focus on teaching students communication skills, functional mobility skills, and social skills. Our MOCI programs also focus on teaching students independent living skills, vocational skills, social skills, and communication skills. Both programs include community-based instruction to allow students opportunities to practice skills within natural environments. Our transitional classroom focuses on academics and the need for generalization of skills within a general education environment.

- Students enrolled in a New Horizons Program do not take any local competency or nationally-normed achievement tests. However, they do participate in modified district reading and math assessments, MI-Access state testing, and curriculum-based assessments. Student growth data over the past two years illustrates that a large majority of students are demonstrating clear growth in both academics and functional skills.

- At New Horizons, we have strong parent involvement in IEP meetings (about 90% of families). We also have additional meetings with parents for students who have specific concerns related to their education, health, or behavior. We host regular parent involvement activities that range from informational events focused on curriculum or school initiatives to school social events. Our parent involvement activities have changed over the past year due to safety protocols related to the pandemic. We have moved toward offering more opportunities that are virtual.

- Students within New Horizons programs offered through North Ed New Horizons do not earn high school credits as they are all participating in curriculum aligned to the alternate state standards leading toward a certificate of completion. Additionally, no students participate in dual-enrolled programs or college-equivalent courses. Most students within our programs continue on with their education after high school to work on transition skills at the Life Skills Center through North Ed. Thank you for taking time to review the New Horizons' AER. We are proud of the progress that students are making and feel fortunate to have committed staff who are constantly implementing interventions to increase student success and support independence and to improve communication with agency partners and families.

Sincerely,
Riley Denison
Special Education Supervisor